

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4902

DIA WASHDC

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

USCINCEUR

C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 7882

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS, MILI, PLO, LE

SUBJECT: SA'IQA OFFICIAL SPEAKS OF FORTIFICATIONS IN PALESTINIAN
REFUGEE CAMPS IN LEBANON

BEGIN UNCLASSIFIED

1. MASSIVE FORTIFICATION WORKS AT THE SABRA/SHATILA CAMP,
CLEARLY VISIBLE FROM NEARBY PUBLIC ROADS, HAVE PROMPTED THE
BEIRUT FRENCH-LANGUAGE DAILY, "L'ORIENT-LE JOUR", TO SEEK
CLARIFICATION FROM PLO SOURCES. FOLLOWING IS STATEMENT,
PUBLISHED JUNE 20, BY ABU HUSSEIN OF THE SYRIAN-SPONSORED
SA'IQA:

"1 - IN UNDERTAKING CONSTRUCTION OF FORTIFICATIONS AT SABRA,
THE RESISTANCE IS ONLY CARRYING OUT A DECISION TAKEN BY THE
ARAB CHIEFS OF STAFF AT A CONFERENCE IN WHICH LEBANESE REP-
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RESENTATIVES PARTICIPATED. MOREOVER, SABRA CAMP IS NOT THE

ONLY CAMP IN WHICH SUCH FORTIFICATIONS EXIST. SIMILAR WORK HAS ALREADY TAKEN PLACE IN OTHER CAMPS, FROM SOUTH LEBANON TO BAALBEK.

"2 - THE PALESTINIAN RESISTANCE, WHICH BELIEVES THAT ITS WAR WITH ISRAEL WILL BE LONG, IS ANXIOUS TO SAFEGUARD THE SECURITY OF ITS SONS. THESE FORTIFICATIONS ARE DESIGNED TO PROTECT BOTH THE PALESTINIANS AND THE LEBANESE AGAINST ISRAELI RAIDS.

"3 - THE FORTIFICATIONS ARE UNDERTAKEN UNDER THE AEGIS OF THE PLO. THE WORKS ARE FINANCED BY THE PALESTIN NATIONAL FUND."

END UNCLASSIFIED

2. BEGIN CONFIDENTIAL. COMMENT: WHILE THE SA'IQA SPOKESMAN DESCRIBES THE NEW EARTHWORKS AS A DEFENSE AGAINST ISRAELI ATTACK, WE BELIEVE IT MUCH MORE LIKELY THAT PALESTINIANS HAVE POSSIBILITY OF FURTHER CLASHES WITH PHALANGISTS (AND POSSIBLY LEBANESE ARMY) IN MIND. NEW WORKS AT SABRA, WHICH HAVE APPEARED SINCE THE PHALANGIST-FEDAYEEN CLASHES LAST APRIL, CONSIST OF AN EARTHEN BERM 15 TO 20 FEET HIGH, THROWN UP AT THE EDGE OF ROAD (IMMEDIATELY SOUTH OF THE CAMP) WHICH LEADS TO THE AIRPORT CIRCLE FROM THE WEST. THE BERM EFFECTIVELY LIMITS DIRECT OBSERVATION (AND FIRE) INTO THE CAMP FROM GROUND LEVEL, AND DOMINATES THE CIRCLE AND MAIN BOULEVARD TO THE AIRPORT.

3. IN ADDITION, WE HAVE HAD VERIFIED REPORTS FOR SOME TIME THAT ARMED PALESTINIAN ELEMENTS ARE OCCUPYING A PINE GROVE BORDERING DIAGONAL ROAD RUNNING SW FROM SOUTHERN ENTRANCE OF SABRA CAMP TOWARD HENRI CHEHAB ARMY CASERNE AND GOLF CLUB OF LEBANON. FROM HILLTOP IMMEDIATELY EAST OF THE CASERNE, PALESTINIANS CAN DOMINATE ARMY INSTALLATION AND SURROUNDING TERRAIN. TENANTS OF APARTMENTS IN VICINITY OF GOLF CLUB MUST PASS THROUGH PALESTINIAN CHECKPOINTS IN MOVING TO AND FROM THEIR HOMES. OUR MOST RECENT REPORT ON THIS SUBJECT PLACES TWO PLATOONS OF PALESTINE LIBERATION ARMY (PLA) "YARMUK BRIGADE" IN AFOREMENTIONED PINE GROVE.

4. CONTINUING PALESTINIAN FORTIFICATION ACTIVITY HAS ADDED TO PERSISTENT STATE OF ANXIETY IN BEIRUT, FACTOR WHICH PROMPTED CONFIDENTIAL

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"L'ORIENT-LE JOUR" TO SEEK PLO CLARIFICATION. WHAT IS CLEAR FROM SUCH ACTIVITIES IS FACT THAT PALESTINIANS ARE CONSOLIDATING THEIR STRANGLEHOLD ON LEBANESE CAPITAL AGAINST POSSIBILITY THAT SECURITY SITUATION WILL AGAIN DEGENERATE INTO GENERALIZED CLASHES. END CONFIDENTIAL.
GODLEY

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